# SOCIALIST APPEAL

An Organ of Revolutionary Socialism

Vol. II. — No. 4 APRIL-MAY 1936 Price 10 Cents

# FROM OUR VIEWPOINT

## BEFORE THE CLEVELAND CONVENTION

WHAT will the New York old guard do at the national convention of the Socialist party to be held in Cleveland during the latter part of May? This question is uppermost in the minds of many non-party as well as party members.

It is not a difficult question to answer. For the simple reason that the New York old guard is out of the party. It has flatly rejected the compromise offered by the National Executive Committee. It has refused to register as provided for in that compromise and no one who has refused to register can be considered a party member.

In addition, the New York old guard has actually placed candidates in an election in opposition to the candidates of the party recognized by the National Executive Committee. At the time of writing it is not known whether the old guard will win out in the primaries against the official Socialist party of New York. Let us assume that it will. This should not and will not make a particle of difference. The profound differences dividing the old guard from the loyal elements in the party cannot be resolved by a decision in a capitalist primary.

He who considers that the New York old guard is still in the party or who even considers the desirability of a compromise with the old guard elements is one who has no understanding of what the Socialist party should be.

* * * *

It would be the height of folly, however, to consider the question of the activities of the old guard at the national convention from the formal point of view that the old guard is now outside of the ranks of the party. The disturbing fact remains that there are, outside of New York, many followers of the old guard. And these followers are being organized through the efforts of the old guard and there will be at the convention many delegates who will represent the viewpoint of the old guard. What will the supporters of the New York right wing do at the convention?

Whatever one may think of the old guard as Socialists one must admit that its adherents are not of the type to give up without a struggle. They might do so in a fight with the capitalists but not as against left wing Socialists. They are not compromisers which is more than can be said of many of the so-called left wingers. No sooner was the meeting of the National Executive Committee over, where the New York charter was suspended, than the extreme right wingers called a conference of the eastern states and there organized an Interstate Conference. At that eastern conference in January the arrogant old guard gave the N.E.C. thirty days in which to retract its suspension of the New York charter. The thirty days having passed by without any weakening by the N.E.C. another conference is to be held March 28-29. At the same time smaller conferences are to held in different sections of the country.

Now there is nothing wrong for members of the party who have a common viewpoint to hold conferences prior to a convention. But the fact remains that these conferences are held at the initiative of those who are no longer members of the party, judged by any sensible standard. These conferences can have no other purpose but to prepare for a split at the convention.

Assuming (as will undoubtedly be the case) that the anti-old guard delegates to the national convention will be in a majority, will the supporters of the old guard walk out of the convention and join their brothers-in-arms? It would seem that such is their intention. What these people want is a bourgeois liberal party with the Social-Democratic label. As insignificant as they are they might organize such a party merely as a bridge to a possible Farmer-Labor party where they will lick the boots of the trade union bureaucrats.

For the future development of a revolutionary Socialist party nothing better could come of the Cleveland convention than the "taking of a walk" by the supporters of the old guard. The left wing must do all in its power to help them make such a decision.

* * * *

What will be left of the convention after the hoped—for departure of the old guard adherents? A revolutionary left wing convention? Not by any stretch of imagination. The right wingers who will remain in the party and that element which can be characterized as centrist will have the dominant majority at the convention. For revolutionary Socialists to fool themselves into thinking otherwise will be disastrous. We must recognize our own strength or rather weakness and base our tactics upon that recognition.

In view of the general situation in the party it will be somewhat difficult for the revolutionary left to act as an independent force at the next convention. To the fullest extent possible, however, the revolutionary delegates must make their position clear on all the issues confronting the party.

Under the circumstances it will be best for the delegates of the left wing to concentrate on a few resolutions. It would be a mistake to begin a discussion on the whole draft program of the left wing. Both the fact of the possible split and the necessity for preparing a platform for the 1936 presidential campaign make it inadvisable to initiate a thorough discussion of the whole program. The left wing should concentrate on some important resolutions and make its position clear on the most vital problems confronting the revolutionary movement.

Here it must be mentioned that our National Executive Committee does not seem to have any idea of the necessity of furnishing some lead to a pre-convention discussion. It is only two months before the convention and no resolutions have been prepared as a basis for such a discussion. The initiative has been taken at a Call conference held recently in New York but only the Labor party resolution has been published thus far.

For the members in the branches to participate intelligently in a pre-convention discussion it is essential that resolutions be drafted and a discussion carried on in our press. Only after such a procedure will our members be in a position to act intelligently on resolutions.

* * * *

The questions of the Labor party, of war, and of the united front are the three important questions upon which the left wing will have to make clear its position. The questions of a platform for the 1936 campaign and of some important changes in the constitution so as to begin the process of transforming the Socialist party into a revolutionary instrument, from the point of view of its structure and membership activity, should also receive some attention at the convention. The Appeal will do its best to include in its pages a discussion of all these questions. But we are not fooling ourselves. Its infrequent appearance and its smallness of size are terrific handicaps.

It is for the comrades of the Call to give us less pictures and dramatic criticism and a little more discussion on problems confronting the revolutionary movement. At least three or four supplements should be included in the regular issues, solely for the purpose of a pre-convention discussion. And if that costs too much then the pictures and dramatic criticism can be left out for a few weeks.

* * * *

Released from the strangle hold of the old guard the Socialist party will be free to develop into a revolutionary party. But for that it is more than ever necessary for the left wingers to organize on a national basis and wage a systematic struggle for the ideas of revolutionary socialism.

## MAY DAY UNITED FRONT IN CHICAGO

A significant departure from precedent was made by the Chicago organization of the Socialist party when it offered a proposal to the Communist party for a united demonstration on May first. It is safe to say that hitherto the C.P. was always the one to initiate proposals for a united front. And in ninety nine cases out of a hundred those proposals were and still are based on an incorrect understanding of the united front tactic. The Executive Committee of the Socialist party of Cook County decided that the united front was too important a thing to permit the Communists to take the initiative and distort its whole meaning.

The comrades in Chicago realized that the united front has only one purpose: to unite working class organizations that differ on fundamental principles but agree to act together for a certain specific objective. All ideas about organizing some permanent united front committees or organizations which under the circumstances can do nothing but carry on propaganda are incorrect. It is clear that the Chicago S. P. members would reject any proposals for a united front pact against war or for a Labor party. Assuming the correctness of the report of the Daily Worker with reference to the united front pact entered into by the S.P. of Terre Haute—a pact for a united front for a Labor party and against war—it is difficult to understand the theory which motivated the Terre Haute comrades to enter into such an agreement. A united front merely for propaganda is incorrect. And a united front against war at the present time necessarily must limit itself to propaganda.

It is of course obvious that even a united front demonstration on May Day is not the highest type of united front. But at least there is the element of common action in the demonstration itself and, if the slogans are agreed upon, there is the element of the specific objective. And if from a theoretical point of view the united front on May Day is not one hundred percent correct it is certainly correct that on the day symbolizing the international solidarity of the working class a united front demonstration should be arranged.

The most serious objection that was raised by some right wing comrades was that we would lose the support of organized labor by joining with the Communists. If it were true that without the Communists organized labor would march with us on May first our preference should be altogether for organized labor. But a realistic analysis convinced the Chicago comrades that most of that element of organized labor that would go out on a demonstration with the S.P. without the Communists would also come along in a united demonstration and some unions that would not participate in any separate demonstration would join a united front demonstration. Our eyes must be mainly on organized labor but we must not forget that section of the militant working class under the influence of the Communists. Especially when our strength in the ranks of organized labor is nothing to boast about.

Care was taken with reference to the mechanics of organizing the united front. It was clear that we cannot simply call a conference to decide on all the questions involved in the united front. A committee was appointed to come to an agreement with the C.P. on all important problems PRIOR to the calling of any conference. In any general conference the C.P. through its innocent organizations is able to dominate. We are determined not to permit a specious majority to tell us what to do in any united front demonstration. The general objective of the demonstration, the slogans and the types of organizations to be invited must be agreed upon before any conference is called. A conference should be called largely for the purpose of mobilizing all workers' organizations for the support of the united front agreement.

While all the details have not as yet been worked out the Socialist party has proposed to center the demonstration around the slogans of unemployment insurance, the 30 hour week, against war and fascism and for socialism against capitalism. While great freedom should be allowed to different organizations in the wording of the slogans these fundamental ideas should be the heart of the demonstration. A joint committee will pass on all the slogans which any one wants to carry in the demonstration.

The only questionable thing which the S.P. thus far agreed to is the holding of a joint indoor meeting in the evening of May first. It would seem that wherever possible a separate indoor meeting should be held by the Socialist party. On May day we must do more than simply march in a united demonstration. We must also give our particular message to that section of the working class following our party. There are too many differences between us and the Communists to justify our surrendering the possibility of holding our meeting.

The Chicago S.P. has taken the road which in general should be followed by the left wing of the rest of the country: We should be the proponents and initiators of a correct united front, a united front of action for some specific purpose; we should oppose all sham united fronts the purpose of which would be simply propaganda.

## HOAN PREFERS LA FOLLETTE TO COMMUNISTS

In Milwaukee the Communists are showing signs of some knowledge of correct tactics. In deciding to support the Socialist and Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation candidates in spite of the fact that those candidates repudiated Communist support, the Stalinists will undoubtedly gain considerably.

The Communists were exceedingly anxious to be permitted to join the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation. And why not? Is it not the forerunner of the American type of People's Front? It is not representative of the mixture of proletarian and middle class confusion which is the whole essence of the Stalinist united front tactic? But alas for the Stalinists, the Socialists and the farmers under La Follette would not permit them into the Federation. Public opinion, by which is meant the opinion of the capitalist press, is too hostile to the Communists to permit the municipal Socialists and the petty-bourgeois reformists to play around with them. And so the Stalinists were left begging and pleading to join the People's Front a la Wisconsin.

What could have motivated Hoan and the other municipal Socialists in refusing to accept the offer of support made by the Communists? It certainly could not be because of the insignificance of the Communists in Milwaukee. For we can be sure that if some insignificant pacifist or church club would endorse the Socialist ticket in Milwaukee, that fact would have been blazoned upon the front pages of the Socialist press. Could it be fear of the possible disruptive tactics which the Stalinists might use? No one who has followed the change of line promulgated in Moscow can possibly fail to see that the Stalinists are ready to lick the boots of any Socialist or petty-bourgeois leader who would give them a chance to do so by accepting their support.

As a general rule if organized labor is willing to come into a united front with the Socialists upon the condition that the Communists be excluded we should go with organized labor. But in the case of the Milwaukee elections it was not a question of a united front but a case where the Communists offered their support after they had been excluded from the People's Front. There was no reason at all for rejecting that offer. The only explanation for the rejection is the fear of Hoan that he would lose the support of the good citizens of Milwaukee.

If there is any one who doubts that statement let him read the speech of Hoan printed in the American Leader of Feb. 28. It is a classic example of what kind of a speech a Socialist candidate for any office should not deliver. Any honest municipal reformer could easily duplicate that kind of a speech.

Revolutionary Socialists have fundamental differences with the Communists and with their blood brothers of reformism, the Social Democrats. But revolutionary Socialists will gladly accept the support of Communists and Social Democrats because they represent sections of the working class. And under proper circumstances revolutionary Socialists will support Communists or other kinds of reformists.

## SOCIALIST OR LABOR PARTY CAMPAIGN IN ILLINOIS

THE Socialist Party of Illinois at its convention to be held in Peoria, April 4-5, will be confronted with the exceedingly important decision whether to join a Labor party and conduct a campaign under the banner of the Labor party or whether to steer clear of all Labor parties and conduct a campaign under its own banner.

In Chicago a Labor party has been organized which is probably different from any Labor party in any part of this coun-

try. It is composed exclusively of trade unions and thus far it permits only members of trade unions to join as individuals. Approximately fifty trade union locals have affiliated. Some of the locals are of substantial character representing important sections of Chicago industry and having a comparatively large membership.

With the obvious intention of exploring the possibilities of organizing a State Labor party and of asking the Socialist party to join it for the purpose of conducting a united campaign in the 1936 elections, the Labor party has called a convention to be held at the same place and time as the convention of the Socialist party. The situation is serious as far as the Socialist party is concerned. For to decline an invitation from the Labor party might mean the rupture of the present friendly relationship between us and the Labor party. On the other hand to accept such an invitation would certainly mean the surrender of a great opportunity to conduct an independent campaign and thus put the party on a solid foundation.

Taking all the factors into consideration it is clear that the party must do everything possible to prevent the Labor party from launching out upon an electoral campaign at the present time. The Labor party represents a small, if not an insignificant, minority of organized labor. Its character is pretty well indicated by the fact that the most conscious elements of the labor movement are at the head of the party. It will undoubtedly attract some locals from outside of Cook County and the organization of unemployed workers. Its ability to conduct an independent campaign, if the Socialists and Communists are not part of it, is highly problematical. In effect it is not yet a real Labor party and will not become so in the very near future. It is nothing but a true union committee for the formation of a Labor party and it should remain so for the time being. Socialist party members active in the Labor party must come out against the launching of an independent campaign at this time.

But let us assume that in spite of all our efforts, the Labor party decides to run a campaign. What then? Should our party join the Labor party and help run the Labor party campaign? Since the Labor party is not a real Labor party from the point of view of numbers; since our party membership is not yet sufficiently educated to distinguish between a Socialist campaign and a Labor party campaign; since organized labor including sections of the Labor party will undoubtedly support Roosevelt; for the above reasons our party should not formally join the Labor party and conduct a campaign on behalf of the Labor party.

However, are we in a position to run candidates against the Labor party candidates? In view of the fact that in most of the localities we shall not have any candidates of our own and also in view of the fact that our party membership will be loathe to run candidates against the Labor party candidates the solution will lie in the following tactic: **to conduct a campaign for socialism on a socialist platform independent of the Labor party platform and give critical support to the Labor party candidates.**

Some comrades will see in this an illogical tactic. How can we conduct our own campaign and yet ask the workers to vote for Labor party candidates? To the ordinary worker who does not think in doctrinaire terms our position will be most natural and will commend itself to him. We shall be in an impregnable position. On the one hand we shall not be breaking the unity of the workers and on the other we shall not be giving up our own program. It will furnish an opportunity for our comrades to conduct a campaign for socialism and at the same time not be disturbed by the question as to why we are opposing the Labor party candidates.

Should the Socialist party of Illinois adopt such a tactic it would follow that all members of the party must participate in the party campaign and not in the Labor party campaign. And this would apply to those members of the party who, by virtue of their trade union connections, are active in the Labor party at the present time.

## "FRIENDS" (!??) OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

REVOLUTIONARY Socialists are not at all opposed to advice on tactics and policies coming from comrades interested in the Socialist party but not members of our party. But when the same advice and warnings come from different and antagonistic sources we have a right to question the motives of the advisors.

The old guard, the Stalinists, the Lovestoneites have all become very solicitous about the welfare of the Socialist party. They are greatly exercised over the possibility of the entry of the Trotskyites into our party. They are all united in warning the poor lambs of the Socialist party as to the dreadful fleecing which they will get from the horrible Trotskyists once they are in the party. Rather remarkable, to say the least, that the enemies of the Socialist party should be so disturbed about the possibility of that party going to ruin.

The correct explanation of the fear which all three groups have of the possibility of the entry of the Trotskyists into the Socialist party is the fact that they are all fearful of the effect of such an entry upon their own miserable organizations. The transformation of the Socialist party into a revolutionary instrument will inevitably mean the disappearance of the influence in the labor movement of the old guard, the Stalinists and their shadows, the Lovestoneites. That the Trotskyists with their insistence upon revolutionary internationalism and with their clear understanding of the principles of revolutionary Marxism will be a force in the revolutionary development of the Socialist party should be evident to all observers.

The possibility of the entry of the Trotskyists into the Socialist party should be greeted with enthusiasm by all members of the party who are interested in a revolutionary Socialist party. Every member of any left wing group who breaks with that group or any group which decides to give up its independent existence will find room in the Socialist party. The only requirement we should demand is acceptance of all obligations of membership and we should not hesitate to grant all the rights of membership.

Will the Trotskyists disagree with us? What of it? If we have any confidence in the correctness of our ideas then we must be prepared to defend them against all other ideas? Or we must be prepared to admit that others are more correct than we are. Only petty bureaucrats who fear a disturbance of their bureaucratic peace will oppose the entry of individuals who have ideas of their own.

The right wing of social democracy, defending their last positions in the Socialist party, uses the possibility of the entry of the Trotskyists to scare the vacillating and week-kneed centrists; the Stalinists understand and fear that the spread of revolutionary ideas in the Socialist party will make it impossible for them to deceive the Socialists and the workers in general with their pseudo-revolutionary camouflage; the Lovestoneites see another chance of sharing in the flesh pots of Stalinism by their hypocritical and dishonest attacks on the Trotskyists.

Revolutionary Socialists have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the entry into the party of a group that will help them in building a revolutionary Socialist party.

## STALINISTS AND SANCTITY OF TREATIES

WE cannot preserve the League of Nation, founded on the sanctity of international treaties, including the covenant of the League itself, if we turn a blind eye to the breaches of those treaties or confine ourselves to verbal protests.... in defense of international undertakings."

Thus thudered Litvinoff.

We have here a plain statement to the effect that the Stalin regime is prepared to send the red army into Germany. For what? Perhaps to help the German workers overthrow Hitler. Assuredly not. Because the German workers have not asked for help. And how well we remember that when Hitler came into power the Stalinists and their supporters attacked the Trotskyists under the pretext that the latter wanted to have the red army march into Germany. They did not but since revolutionary Marxists consider the red army an instrument of the international proletariat, it is clear that under proper circum-

(Continued on page 8)

# LABOR PARTY CONFUSION

Albert Goldman

There are enough major mistakes in the resolution on the Farmer-Labor party passed at the Call conference held in New York and published in the Call of March 7, 1936, to make it absolutely unacceptable to any revolutionary Socialist. The closer we come to the actual formation of a Labor party or a Farmer-Labor party the more careful must we be and consequently, in drawing a resolution at the present moment when all kinds of Farmer-Labor parties are spinging up, great care should be taken to stress fundamental principles which should under no circumstances be forgotten by any Socialist.

In the state of Wisconsin the Socialist party has joined the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation; in Terre Haute the S.P. has made a pact with the Communists to work for a Labor party; in many sections of the country our party is contemplating joining some kind of a Farmer-Labor party. The question, in other words, has been taken out of the realm of mere theory and in entering the world of practice, we might find ourselves confronted by monstrosities which will set our party back rather than advance its interests and the interests of the labor movement.

Every resolution dealing with the formation of a Labor or Farmer-Labor party, passed at any Socialist conference, must stress the point that we do not believe that a Labor party will solve the problems of the working class. It is just because there is so little understanding of that simple but fundamental idea that it is so necessary to emphasize it. It is safe to say that most Socialists, even amongst those tending to the left, are in favor of a Labor party either because they believe that a Labor party is the one thing necessary to solve the problems of labor or because they have lost hope in the ability of the Socialist party to lead the working class to socialism. It is one thing to look upon the Labor party as a step forward in the struggle for socialism; it is quite another thing to consider it as able to solve any important problem confronting the working class.

The resolution published in the Call states that the S.P. should not "become submerged in the Farmer-Labor Party" and also states that eventually "only a revolutionary party with a Socialist program will be in a position to lead the masses to a working class victory." But the whole tone of the resolution is that "eventually" we should think of building a revolutionary party. Whereas throughout the resolution the idea that it is NOW our main task and will be at all times to build a revolutionary Socialist party should be as clear as crystal. The task of building a Labor party is at most a subsidiary one and is not aimed primarily to gain a concession or two but to set the workers into motion on the road of independent political action.

At the present period of the development of capitalism it is inconceivable that a reformist Labor party can gain much in the way of reforms from the capitalist class. We are living in a period of the decline of capitalism and not of its upswing. And in such a period it is necessary to wage a revolutionary struggle in order to achieve any substantial reforms. It is as safe as anything can be to say that a real Labor party will not wage a revolutionary struggle. Our attitude to workers in trade unions who want a Labor party should not be the one which would deepen their illusions with reference to such a party. We must frankly tell them that we do not believe that a Labor party will solve their problems; that only socialism can do that and socialism requires a revolutionary Socialist party. We must tell them that we favor such a party simply because it is a step in the direction of independent working class action and that we are willing to go along with them so long as they are not convinced that our party offers the correct solution.

"Either a Labor party or fascism" is the threat that is made by many a Socialist speaker who has not given any too much thought to the problem. And what reason is there to believe that a Labor party will be able to defeat fascism? If the Socialist and Communist parties of Germany could not defeat fascism will a reformist Labor party in this country be able to do so? You will say that the working class of Germany was divided. Was the Austrian Socialist party, who had under its banner practically the whole working class of Austria, able to defeat fascism? Unity is necessary to defeat fascism but it takes more than unity alone to achieve that result. We shall admit that in so far as the formation of a Labor party at the present time would raise the morale of the workers the struggle against a posible fascism would be made easier but it is the height of folly to expect that a Labor party will do away with the possibility of fascism. The struggle against fascism is essentially a struggle for socialism and this demands a revolutionary Socialist party. To accept the alternative of Labor party or fascism is to fall right into the same error of the Stalinists who have accepted the idea of fascism or bourgeois democracy. They have forgotten that fascism springs out of conditions as they are and to do away with the possibility of fascism one must destroy these conditions.

While the resolution passed at the Call conference is way above the ordinary Socialist resolution dealing with the question of a Labor party in the recognition of the need of a revolutionary Socialist party, still the necessity of building such a revolutionary party is not sufficiently stressed. We must remind our comrades that it would be infinitely better for the working class if the necessity of a Labor party would disappear by the fact of the growth of the Socialist party. And it is not at all excluded that our party can grow to a point, before any Labor party worthy of the name is formed, where the formation of a Labor party would be a detriment rather than a step forward.

* * * *

It should need no extensive argument to convince anyone in the least acquainted with the elementary principles of Marxism that we should strive with all our might to favor a Labor party rather than a Farmer-Labor party. It is axiomatic with all Marxists that the class struggle which will transform capitalist society into socialist society is a struggle primarily between the industrial wage-working class and the big capitalist class. A revolutionary Socialist party is a party which represents the historic interests of the working class and stresses the importance of the independent action of the working class as against all other classes. This does not mean of course that the working class is not interested in the support of the middle class including the farmers. It must strive to win the support of large sections of that class and neutralize other sections. It does mean however that the party of the working class can make no permanent alliance with organizations purporting to represent the middle class or the people in general. The party of the working class must attempt to win the middle class masses away from the middle class parties and not unite with such parties. It can do so by fighting for the demands of the middle class masses to a greater extent than the middle class parties.

There are comrades who are so enamored with the false idea of a two class party that even when there are, practically speaking, no farmers' organizations joining with labor organizations to form a party they insist upon creating a Farmer-Labor instead of a Labor party. There can be no objection to an organization of farmers accepting the program of the Labor party and becoming part of that party. But there should be decided objection to the idea of having a two-class party in the sense of organizations representing farmers getting together with labor organizations to form one party.

The formation recently of the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation where the Socialist party joined with the LaFolette group to form a party (together with other groups) is a classic example of what kind of a party revolutionary Socialists should avoid if at all possible. This is a party where the petty borgeoisie will have the complete hegemony instead of vice versa. But of course nothing else could be expected of a Socialist party such as the Wisconsin party which essentially is a "people's" party.

While Socialists should exert all their efforts against the formation of a Farmer-Labor party, a different question arises where one is formed in spite of their oposition. To join such a party is permissible and necessary under certain circumstances; to help create one is impermissible and harmful.

If the above analysis is correct it is obvious that the resolution of the Call conference is quite defective. To be sure it intimates

that the "wage-earning working class is the spearhead of the attack against capitalism" but it flatly comes out in favor of a Farmer-Labor party.

* * * *

It is on the programmatic position which the Call conference resolution outlines for a Labor party that the greatest confusion exists. After the resolution correctly enumerates the five characteristics of a Labor party it proceeds to lay down a nine-point program which from a Socialist point of view is thoroughly incorrect. In the first instance the resolution declares that the Socialist party shall **favor** certain programmatic provisions. Then it goes on to say what the Labor party **must** contain in its program. And it does not distinguish between those points which we must simply favor and those which must be included as an absolute condition to our entry. But a more serious objection to the whole program is that it is an indication of a fundamentally wrong approach to the idea of a Labor party.

If we view the Labor party as an instrument which will set the workers into motion on the road of independent political action and not as a party which will solve the fundamental problems of the working class the important factors must be considered to be the composition of the party and its independence of middle class organizations and domination. As far as the actual program is concerned the more it confines itself to immediate demands, such as the six hour day or unemployment insurance, the healthier it will be for the Labor party and for the Socialist party. Not that we should prevent the Labor party from coming out with the idea of the socialization of the means of production but that we should not consider such a point in the Labor program as essential. If we should consider it essential then we are close to the concept of substituting the Labor party for the Socialist party.

And that is exectly what is happening in Wisconsin. The fact that the Wisconsin comrades fought so strenuously for the inclusion of the idea of production for use in the program of the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation and are so enthusiastic about their "victory" should not prevent us from seeing clearly that it is just that point which will practically destroy all signs of demarcation between the Wisconsin Socialists and the other groups in the Federation. That "victory" is somewhat dimmed by the fact that "production for use" is defined as the public ownership of "the basic monopolistically controlled industries." It would have been a thousand times better had the Wisconsin Socialists fought against any alliance with the LaFollette group. But then they would not have been Wisconsin Socialists.

The Socialists in going into any Labor party must fight for their **full** program. It may be that we shall be unable to wage a successful struggle for the adoption of our full program but we must not create the impression that we are satisfied with anything but our full program. We shall accept a lesser program not because we want to but because we are in a small minority. There may be some points in the program which would prevent us from joining and we should struggle strenuously against such points. But we are not in a position as Socialists to be satisfied with anything less than our complete program. We should "favor" including in the Labor party program everything that we stand for. To do otherwise is creating illusions for ourselves and the workers.

Judging by the standard set forth above the whole nine-point program for a Labor party should be thrown out. What does the third point of the program mean? "The program shall be based on American conditions." Does that mean that we Socialists must be against inserting into the program some demands dealing with international problems? Consider the sixth point, favoring taking over power through the ballot box. Does that mean that if the Labor party should adopt a revolutionary philosophy we Socialists should oppose that? There was obviously no thought given to the whole theory of a Labor party. Otherwise there would have been the simple declaration that the Socialist party will participate in a Labor party the heart of which is organized labor and that, since it is out of the question that a Labor party will accept the full Socialist program, it will attempt to keep that program to such demands as are not inconsistent with the program of our party provided further that we be given the unconditional right to propagate our own program.

Probably the best method to furnish a program for a Labor party is first to write a good platform for a Socialist campaign for 1936 and then present the document to any conference for the formation of a Labor party and let that conference choose that part of the platform acceptable to the representatives of organized labor.

* * *

No one can quarrel with that part of the resolution dealing with a Labor party in 1936 and with local Labor parties. Organized labor is not yet ready, in the main, to leave Roosevelt. Consequently there can be no talk in forming anything but a caricature of a Labor party. The possibility (or better the certainty) that the dominant sections of the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation will support Roosevelt and that the Socialists will support Thomas in the national campaign is not anything to be enthusiastic about. And that possibility is almost certain with every local Labor party where organized labor will be represented in substantial numbers. It should be an invariable rule with Socialists that where the Labor party is not yet ready to break with Roosevelt we must not encourage or enter into such a party.

The threat of the Communists to do something desperate if we do not unite with them to form a Labor party in the immediate future should be completely ignored. There is something to be said in favor of an agreement between Socialists and Communists to support each other's candidates but nothing at all in favor of launching a Labor party on the basis of a union between these two parties.

Taking all the factors into consideration the Socialist party by conducting an independent campaign all over the country, on correct revolutionary principles, has a great opportunity to strengthen itself in numbers and morale. To play around with Labor Tickets or with local Labor parties will in the vast majority of cases do great damage to the party.

But the correctness of the resolution on the points dealing with a Labor party in 1936, with Labor tickets and with local Labor parties is more than outweighed by the incorrectness of the fundamental approach to the whole problem of a Labor party. The resolution therefore should be completely rewritten.

# WHAT SHALL OUR WAR PROGRAM BE?

Samuel Adams

THE imminence of war and the precedence it takes in the question of program for the workers' movement is admitted by all sections of our Party, whether they be the extreme right wing reformists, or those who represent the ideas of revolutionary Marxism. That is not difficult to understand. War, representing as it does the extension of politics, is by its very nature the acutest form of the capitalist crisis, the means by which the critically-situated capitalist world hopes to issue from its present impasse. Bearing this in mind, it becomes clear that it is incumbent for our Party to set itself down to the task of examining the present war danger with a view of working out a COMPLETE and CONCRETE program on the question of war and the tasks of the revolutionaries.

We have at hand the Resolution on War adopted at a recent Call conference and which is to be submitted to the Convention by the left wing. Information is present that some changes are to be made in it. If the resolution is to be changed, we hope that the contents of this article will bear acceptable suggestions to the revised resolution.

In the treatment of the war question, mere formal opposition to war no longer suffices. The program has to be concrete and real. It must not be afraid to state what is, to name names, to point the actual way out for the working class. Failure to do that, means to mouth again the age-worn platitudes of opposition to war, in order thereby the better to repeat the terrible crimes of 1914, when the working class movement was dismembered by its leaders first succumbing to social-patriotism and then directing the workers' organizations into the hands of the

war governments. Our Party needs a complete and concrete anti-war program also in order to begin now to train the youth organization, which is the heaviest sufferer of the war, in how to properly combat war and attendant militarism. This involves a training in fundamentals, that is, Marxism.

If we reject the theory of vanguardism (the concept that holds to the idea that the youth movement can lead the working class in the class struggle and to its final victory over capitalism), then it becomes all the more necessary for the Party to take in hand the political direction of the youth organization. It goes without saying, that such a direction has to be correct, and before the Party can be expected to politically direct the destinies of the youth organization, it must first give itself a thorough dosing of Marxism. We are compelled to recall at this point the conduct of the German and Austrian social democratic youth organizations. The former offered 700 of its units to the Kaiser for the purpose of prosecuting the war against the Allies, and the latter adopted the leading slogan for the organization: "On to Paris!" It is clear that this would have been impossible, had not the Parties in these countries set the example by their support to the war by the Central European Powers. By and large, however, the International Socialist Youth Union remained loyal to the principles of Marxism, in the last war.

The resolution of the Call conference, while it is an elaboration over the section on war contained in the draft program adopted at Bound Brook, New Jersey, leaves out a number of important and decisive questions that are mentioned there, if only by a word or sentence. The present resolution is totally inadequate however, not only in what is ommitted but also, in what it contains. In its present form it is strictly not a guide to the Party or the youth organization. It might be argued that the resolution is too short to permit of a detailed analysis, or a thorough one. But there is nothing which compells us to confine ourselves to a short resolution, unless we already have a lengthy programmatic declaration. The size of the resolution would not be a point of complaint were its contents complete and correct, without necessarily amplifying ideas. Let us proceed to the resolution.

In the opening paragraphs the resolution contains strictures on the conception of "good" capitalists and "bad" capitalists; the idea that it is necessary for the working class to support the democratic capitalist nations against the fascist capitalist nations. Quite correctly it rejects this social-patriotic conception. But against whom does the resolution speak out? Apparently, against nobody.

Yet, this conception, which means sending the working class to slaughter in the name of the myth of defending democracy (under capitalist rule) against fascism, is part of the war program of the Stalinists, who make up no small part of the organized labor movement, and a number of social democratic parties and leaders, including so-called left wingers (Bauer, Dan and Zyromski). If this section of the resolution is to mean anything, it has to state the origin of this theory and its proponents. Without that, we are shadow-boxing, afraid to set up before the real opponents. The resolution should say: this theory is advanced inside the workers' movement by the Stalinist International, by large parties in the social democracy, and by such leaders as Bauer, Dan and Zyromski. If "we are opposed to all programs which rely on war by capitalist states to overthrow fascist dictatorships," then we must state whose programs we mean. Not only that, we must explain our opposition to this, as well as other forms of social-patriotism.

The resolution warns against seduction at the hands of the League of Nations, since it is an instrument in the hands of Anglo-French imperialism. Quite correct. That has been the contention of Marxists since the inception of the League. But who champions the League of Nations? The imperialists? Quite correct! But we need no warning against them. We are however, in need of a warning against the agents of such ideas in the labor movement. It is within the working class movement that this point of view is conjured up before us. Here again it is the Stalinists, and the right wing social democrats who are the champions of the League of Nations at a time when it exhibits its worst features. The resolution, however, is deadly silent on this question.

The same could be said about the matter of sanctions. Once again we find organizations (Stalinists, trade unionsists, social democrats,) in the labor movement urging sanctions against Italian fascism. The resolution, speaking out against the policy of sanctions because it is a weapon of one imperialism, or a set of imperialists against others, fails to explain why it is so acute a problem for the working class. It became such a decisive problem not only because in its application it would decisively affect the proletariat, but the more so, because sanctions were advocated by large sections of the labor and political movement of the workers. The resolution should have drawn the lessons of the plea for sanctions in the ranks of the working class by stating where it came from, how it arose, and how you can combat it.

The resolution speaks of the defense of the Soviet Union by the independent activity of the working class internationally. It speaks also of the necessity of remaining independent from soviet diplomacy. Why is it necessary to say this? It remains unexplained in the resolution. If the resolution contains such statements it ought to go on to explain what compelled them. It would have been necessary to show that the 3rd International has become subordinated to the diplomacy of the Soviet Union, which in turn is based on the nationalist conceptions of building socialism, held by the present Soviet regime. This same diplomacy desires to subordinate all working class activity in the world to its national'st needs. If we find it necessary to declare that our international independent activity for the overthrow of capitalism must not be subordinated to Soviet Diplomacy, we should then state very definitely that we pose internationalism against nationalism, as it is represented by the 3rd International. We would have to show the ramifications of soviet diplomacy and how it effects the activities of the international labor movement. But here again, nothing is explained.

Should war break out despite anti-war efforts on our part, the resolution calls for a general strike to put an end to the war. To impose the general strike in a period of war requires the highest type of revolutionary organization. It means to bring you into sharp conflict with a ruling class which is organized to meet precisely such an eventuality by the use of armed forces. If the general strike is to mean anything in the way of stopping war, it implies the necessity of organizing the workers to meet the resistance of the capitalist state by the same weapons: to meet the armed assault of the ruling class with the armed resistance of the working class. Clearly, here is involved the whole problem of the struggle for power. The general strike is merely one phase of that struggle, although admittedly, one of the important phases of it. The resolution voices the utopian idea that during a war a general strike can be called not as the initial stage of the overthrow of the capitalist class but simply to stop the war.

The resolution says nothing of pacifism. The program should analyse this movement which threatens the working class with impotence preceding the war and then ties it to the chariot of the imperialist powers once the conflagration begins.

Revolutionary defeatism is referred to in passing. There is, however, no explanation of this great revolutionary tactic employed by the Marxists in the last war. A great deal of confusion exists here. The resolution does not trace the development of the tactic, cites no examples, and does not educate our movement in its significance. For our movement, the question of "revolutionary defeatism" (the resolution does not refer to it in exactly that form, and it does not necessarily have to use the two words so long as the concept is fully contained) is a comparitively new one and it is necessary to begin the education at once and without delay. Where would have been a better place to begin than in this resolution?

These random criticisms of the resolution are made with the aim of suggesting improvements for its final writing. The writer realizes that this is not a complete and finished criticism, but the important and decisive questions are posed. The war resolution ought to take up the following: the causes of war; the role of social-patriotism (the 1914 vintage and the Stalinist vintage of 1936), an attack upon national defense, the question of pacifism, the League of Nations, sanctions, revolutionary defeatism (with which is connected up the question of the general

strike), the struggle for power, and finally and most important, the establishment of the worker's state, by saying exactly what it is, how it will come into being, and what its role and function is.

In drawing up such a resolution these points have to be placed in their proper order. They have to be properly connected up with one another. As already indicated, they should be explained fully and concretely. You have to say what is. You cannot be abstract and vague. The resolution must be of such a kind that no variety of interpretations are possible. It must be the kind of resolution that cannot be supported by Marxists, anti-Marxists, pacifists, social-patriots and the like. Such a resolution would be without any value whatsoever, because no resolution can satisfy all these elements standing antagonistic to one another. Our purpose must be clarity and not great confusion. As the resolution stands now, it will make confusion more confounded. And that is precisely what we must avoid.

# THE GENERAL STRIKE "TO STOP WAR"

## Leon Trotsky

Note: The following article is a section of a larger article dealing with the program of the Independent Labor Party of England. The original article apears in the December 1935 issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. In every resolution of left wing Socialists, dealing with war the general strike is advocated as a tactic to "stop the war." It is about time to begin an examination of that concept and we deem it essential that every revolutionary Socialist acquaint himself with comrade Trotsky's criticism of that idea.

THE question of the general strike has a long and rich history, in theory as well as practice. Yet the leaders of the I.L.P. behave as if they were the first to run across the idea of general strike, as a method to stop war. In this is their greatest error. Improvisation is impermissible precisely on the question of the general strike. The world experience of the struggle during the last forty years has been **fundamentally** a confirmation of what Engels had to say about the general strike towards the close of the last century, primarily on the basis of the experience of the Chartists, and in part of the Belgians. Cautioning the Austrian social democrats against much too flighty an attitude towards the general strike, Engels wrote to Kautsky, on November 3, 1893, as follows: "You yourself remark that the barricades have become antiquated (they may, however, prove useful again should the army turn 1 3 or 2 5 socialist and the question arise of providing it with the opportunity to turn its bayonets), but the political strike must either prove victorious immediately by the threat alone (as in Belgium, where the army was very shaky), or it must end in a colossal fiasco, or, finally, **lead directly to the barricades.**" These terse lines provide, incidentally, a remarkable exposition of Engels' views on a number of questions. Innumerable controversies raged over Engel's famous introduction to Marx's **The Class Struggle in France** (1895), an introduction which was in its time modified and cut in Germany with a view to censorship. Philistines of every stripe have asserted hundreds and thousands of times during the last forty years that "Engels himself" had apparently rejected once and for all the ancient "romantic" methods of street fighting. But there is no need of referring to the past: one need only read the contemporary and inordinately ignorant and mawkish discourses of Paul Faure, Lebas and others on this subject, who are of the opinion that the very question of armed insurrection is "Blanquism." Concurrently, if Engels rejected anything, it was first of all, **putsches,** i.e. **un-timely** flurries of a **small minority**; and secondly; antiquated methods, that is to say, forms and methods of street fighting which did not correspond to the new technological conditions. In the above quoted letter, Engels corrects Kautsky, in passing, as if he were referring to something self-evident; barricades have become "antiquated" only in the sense that the bourgeois revolution has receded into the past, and the time for the socialist barricades has not come as yet. It is necessary for the army, one third, or better still, two fifths of it (these ratios, of course, are given only for the sake of illustration), to become imbued with sympathy for socialism; then the insurrection would not be a "putsch," then the barricades would once again come into their own—not the barricades of the year 1848, to be sure, but the new "barricades," serving, however, the self-same goal: to check the offensive of the army against the workers, give the soldiers the opportunity and the time to sense the power of the uprising, and by this to create the most advantageous conditions for the army's passing over to the side of the insurrectionists. How far removed are these lines of Engels—not the youth, but the man 73 years of age!—from the asinine and reactionary attitude to the barricade, as a piece of "romanticism"! Kautsky has found the leisure to publish this remarkable letter just recently, in 1935! Without engaging in a direct polemic with Engels, whom he never understood **fully,** Kautsky tells us smugly, in a special note, that toward the end of 1893, he had himself published an article in which he "developed the advantages of the democratic-proletarian method of struggle in democratic countries as against the policy of violence." These remarks about "advantages" (as if the proletariat has the freedom of choice!) have a particularly choice ring in our day, after the policies of the Weimar democracy, not without Kautsky's co-operation, have fully revealed all their.... disadvantages. To leave no room for doubt as to his own attitude on Engels' views, Kautsky goes on to add, "I defended then the self-same policy I defend today." In order to defend "the self-same policy" Kautsky needed only to become a citizen of Czecho-Slovakia: outside of the passport, nothing has changed.

But let us return to Engels. He differentiates, as we have seen, between three cases in relation to the political strike:

(1) The government **takes fright** at the general strike, and at the very outset, without carrying matters to an open clash, takes to concessions. Engels points to the "shaky" condition of the army in Belgium as the basic condition for the success of the Belgian general strike (1893). A somewhat similar situation, but on a much more colossal scale, occurred in Russia, October, 1905. After the miserable outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, the Czarist army was, or, at any rate, seemed extremely unreliable. The Petersburg government, thrown into a mortal panic by the strike, made the first constitutional concessions (Manifesto, October 17, 1905).

It is all too evident, however, that without resorting to decisive battles, the ruling class will make only such concessions as will not touch the basis of its rule. That is precisely how matters stood in Belgium and Russia. Are such cases possible in the future? They are inevitable in the countries of the Orient. They are, generally speaking, less probable in the countries of the West, although, here too, they are quite possible as partial episodes of the unfolding revolution.

(2) If the army is sufficiently reliable, and the government feels sure of itself; if a political strike is promulgated from above, and if, at the same time, it is calculated not for decisive battles, but to "frighten" the enemy, then it can easly turn out a mere adventure, and reveal its utter impotence. To this we ought to add that after the initial experiences of the general strike, the novelty of which reacted upon the imagination of the popular masses as well as governments, several decades have elapsed—discounting the half-forgotten Chartists—in the course of which the strategists of capital have accumulated an enormous experience. That is why a general strike, particularly in the old capitalist countries, requires a painstaking Marxist accounting of all the concrete circumstances.

(3) Finally, there remains a general strike which, as Engels put it, "leads directly to the barricades." A strike of this sort can result either in complete victory or defeat. But to shy away from battle, when the battle is forced by the objective situation, is to lead inevitably to the most fatal and demoralizing of all possible defeats. The outcome of a revolutionary, insurrectionary general strike depends, of course, upon the relationship of forces, covering a great number of factors: the class differentiation of society, the specific weight of the proletariat, the mood of the lower layers of the petty-bourgeoisie, the social composition and the political mood of the army, etc. However, among the conditions for victory, far from the last place is occupied by the **correct revolutionary leadership, a clear understanding of condi-**

**tions and methods of the general strike and its transition to open revolutionary struggle.**

Engels' classification must not, of course, be taken dogmatically. In present day France not partial concessions but power is indubitably in question: the revolutionary proletariat or Fascism —which? The working class masses want to struggle. But the leadership applies the brakes, hoodwinks and demoralizes the workers. A general strike can flare up just as the movement flared in Toulon and Brest. Under these conditions, independently of its immediate results, a general strike will not of course be a "putsch" but a necessary stage in the mass struggle, the necessary means for casting off the treachery of the leadership and for creating within the working class itself the preliminary conditions for a victorious uprising. In this sense the policy of the French Bolshevik-Leninists is entirely correct, who have advanced the slogan of general strike, and who explain the conditions for its victory. The French cousins of the S.A.P. come against this slogan, the Spartacists who at the beginning of the struggle are already assuming the role of strikebreakers.

We should also add that Engels did not point out another "category" of general strike, examples of which have been provided in England, Belgium, France and some other countries: we refer here to cases in which the leadership of the strike previously, i.e. without a struggle, arrives at an agreement with the class enemy as to the course and outcome of the strike. The parliamentarians and the trade unionists perceive at a given moment the need to provide an outlet for the accumulated ire of the masses, or they are simply compelled to jump in step with a movement that has flared over their heads. In such cases they come scurrying through the backstairs to the Government and obtain the permission to head the general strike, this with the obligation to conclude it as soon as possible, without any damage being done to the state crockery. Sometimes, far from always, they manage to haggle beforehand some petty concessions, to serve them as figleaves. Thus did the General Council of British Trade Unions (T.U.C.) in 1926. Thus did Jouhaux in 1934. Thus will they act in the future also. The exposure of these contemptible machinations behind the backs of the struggling proletariat enters as a necessary part into the preparation of a general strike.

* * * *

To which type does a general strike belong which is specially intended by the I.L.P. in the event of mobilization, as a means to stop war at the very outset? We want to say beforehand: it pertains to the most inconsidered and unfortunate of all types possible. This does not mean to say that the revolution can never coincide with mobilization or with the outbreak of war. If a wide-scale revolutionary movement is developing in a country, if at its head is a revolutionary party possessing the confidence of the masses and capable of going through to the end; if the government, losing its head, despite the revolutionary crisis, or just because of such a crisis, plunges headlong into a war adventure—then the mobilization can act as a mighty impetus for the masses, lead to a general strike of railwaymen, fraternization between the mobilized and the workers, seizure of important key centers, clashes between insurrectionists and the police and the reactionary sections of the army, the establishment of local, workers' and soldiers' council, and, finally, to the complete overthrow of the government, and consequently, to stopping the war. Such a case is theoretically possible. If, in the words of Clausewitz, "war is the continuation of politics by other means," then the struggle against war is also the continuation of the entire preceding policy of a revolutionary class and its party. Hence follows that a general strike can be put on the order of the day as a method of struggle against mobilization and war only in the event that the entire preceding developments in the country have placed revolution and armed insurrection on the order of the day. Taken, however, as a "special" method of struggle against mobilization, a general strike would be a sheer adventure. Excluding a possible but nevertheless an exceptional case of a government plunging into war in order to escape from a revolution that directly threatens it, it must remain, as a general rule, that precisely prior to, during, and after mobilization the government feels itself strongest, and, consequently, least inclined to allow itself to be scared by a general strike. The patriotic moods that accompany mobilization, together with the war terror make hopeless the very execution of a general strike, as a rule. The most intrepid elements who, without taking the circumstances into account, plunge into the struggle, would be crushed. The defeat, and the partial annihilation of the vanguard would make difficult for a long time revolutionary work in the atmophere of dissatisfaction that war breeds. A strike called artificially must turn inevitably into a putsch, and into an obstacle in the path of the revolution.

In its theses accepted in April, 1935, the I.L.P. writes as follows: "The policy of the party aims at the use of a **general strike** to stop war and at **social revolution** should war occur." An astonishingly precise, but—sad to say, absolutely fictitious obligation! The general strike is not only separated here from the social revolution but also counterposed to it as a specific method to "stop war." This is an ancient conception of the anarchists which life itself smashed long ago. A general strike without a victorious insurrection cannot "stop war." If, under the conditions of mobilization, the insurrection is impossible, then so is a general strike impossible.

In an ensuing paragraph we read: "The I.L.P. will urge a General Strike against the British Government, if this country is in any way involved in an attack on the Soviet Union...." If it is possible to forestall **any** war by a general strike, then of course it is all the more necessary to stop war **against the U.S.S.R.** But here we enter into the realm of illusions: to inscribe in the theses a general strike as **punishment** for a given **capital crime** of the Government is to commit the sin of revolutionary phrasemongering. If it were possible to call a general strike at will, then it would be best called today to prevent the British Government from strangling India and from collaborating with Japan to strangle China. The leaders of the I.L.P. will of course tell us that they have not the power to do so. But nothing gives them the right to promise that they will apparently have the power to call general strike on the day of mobilization. And if they be able, why confine it to a strike? As a matter of fact, the conduct of a party during mobilization will flow from its preceding successes and from the situation in the country as a whole. But the aim of revolutionary policy should not be an isolated general strike, as a special means to "stop war," but the proletarian revolution into which a general strike will enter as an inevitable or a very probable integral part.

---

## STALINISTS

(Continued from page 3)

stances, the working class of Germany should expect the help of the red army.

But the Stalinists are willing to send the red army into Germany. For the purpose of preserving the sanctity of international capitalist treaties. FOR THE PURPOSES OF DEFENDING FRENCH IMPERIALISM. For that, yes. For the working class revolution, no.

And they dare to use the name of Lenin!

**SOCIALIST APPEAL**
Chicago Editorial Committee
Ernest Erber — Albert Goldman — Rudolph C. Olson
Business Mgr. Rudolph C. Olson
4219 Lincoln Ave. Chicago, Ill.
Subscription rates: one dollar, 12 issues—50 cents 6 issues